

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, MASS, YO, US

SUBJECT: PRESS STORY ON U.S. POLICY ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE
TO YUGOSLAVIA

1. WASHINGTON POST OF APRIL 15 CARRIED ARTICLE ON EDITORIAL
PAGE BY EVANS AND NOVAK ENTITLED, "THE ISSUES BEHIND U.S.
ARMS TO YUGOSLAVIA." TEXT FOLLOWS:

--- QUOTE: ALTHOUGH FINAL AGREEMENT HAS NOT BEEN REACHED,
THE FORD ADMINISTRATION IS NOW MOVING FAST TOWARD A NEW
ARMS DEAL WITH COMMUNIST YUGOSLAVIA LADEN WITH FAR MORE
POLITICAL THAN MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE.

--- THE DEAL: SELLING BELGRADE THE ADVANCED U.S. ANTI-TANK
WEAPON, CALLED THE TOW WIRE-GUIDED MISSILE. INITIAL
DELIVERY WOULD PROBABLY BE LIMITED TO TRAINING UNITS BE-
CAUSE THE WEAPON IS IN EXTREMELY SHORT SUPPLY.

--- BUT EVEN STARTING AT A LOW LEVEL, THE CENTRAL POINT
WOULD BE QUICKLY PERCEIVED BY MOSCOW AND ITS WARSAW PACT
ALLIES IN EASTERN EUROPE: THAT THE U.S. CLAIMS A DIRECT
AND ACTIVE MISSION IN MAINTAINING YUGOSLAVIA'S INDEPENDENCE
FROM SOVIET INTERFERENCE AFTER THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT TITO.

--- TITO, NOW 84, HAS GOVERNED YUGOSLAVIA SINCE WORLD WAR
II. FOLLOWING HIS BREAK WITH MOSCOW IN 1948, HE LEFT THE

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SOVIET BLOC FOR NON-ALIGNED, THIRD WORLD STATUS.

--- THE PROSPECT OF SOVIET MACHINATIONS AFTER TITO IS CERTAIN, IN AN EFFORT TO BREAK THAT INDEPENDENCE AND DESTROY THE FRAGILE UNITY WHICH HAS HELD THE COUNTRY TOGETHER DESPITE CONFLICTING CULTURES AND DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

--- THUS, WHAT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION IS SIGNALING MOSCOW BY MEANS OF THE CURRENT ARMS TALKS WITH YUGOSLAVIA IS TO KEEP HANDS OFF, OR RISK COUNTERACTION BY THE WEST. THIS COMPORTS WITH THE WARNING OF STATE DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR HELMUT SONNENFELDT IN HIS OTHERWISE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL SESSION LAST DECEMBER WITH U.S. DIPLOMATS IN LONDON: "WE . . . HAVE AN INTEREST WHICH BORDERS ON THE VITAL FOR US IN CONTINUING THE INDEPENDENCE OF YUGOSLAVIA FROM SOVIET DOMINATION."

--- THE CLUE TO PRESIDENT FORD'S UNANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RESUME SERIOUS ARMS SALES TO YUGOSLAVIA IS FOUND IN AN ALMOST HIDDEN PASSAGE CONTAINED IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S JUSTIFICATION OF ITS FAR-FLUNG ARMS DEALS (THE "SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM") SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS LAST MONTH.

--- REFERRING TO YUGOSLAVIA'S "STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT POSITION IN THE HEART OF THE BALKANS," THE STATEMENT PRAISES ITS "INDEPENDENT POLITICS" AND NON-ALIGNMENT AND ASSERTS AN AMERICAN POLICY "TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE" TO BELGRADE'S ARMS REQUESTS.

--- THE NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR STARTING ON OCT. 1 INCLUDES \$1.5 MILLION FOR CASH SALES TO YUGOSLAVIA -- AN AMOUNT FAR GREATER THAN ANY MILITARY SALES TO BELGRADE SINCE THE EARLY 1960S. INDEED, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ARMS SALES -- SPARE PARTS AND AMMUNITION -- OVER THE PAST 11 YEARS COMBINED BARELY EQUALS THE AMOUNT THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAS AGREED TO SELL NEXT YEAR.

--- WITH NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE TOW MISSILE NOT COMPLETED, MILITARY EXPERTS HERE ARE UNCERTAIN WHAT QUANTITY THE YUGOSLAVS WANT, BOTH NEXT YEAR AND IN THE LONGER RUN. BUT THE EXPECTATION IS THAT THE EVENTUAL NUMBER OF WEAPONS (COSTING ABOUT \$100,000 FOR EACH LAUNCHER WITH 15 MISSILES) WOULD BE DESIGNED TO PROTECT YUGOSLAVIA FROM POSSIBLE AIRBORNE INVASION WITH AIR-LIFTED TANKS, RATHER THAN DEFENDING THE LONG AND HIGHLY VULNERABLE PLAINS ALONG THE BORDER WITH RUMANIA. TO REACH THAT BORDER, SOVIET FORCES

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WOULD HAVE TO PENETRATE AND CROSS RUMANIA, WHICH WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RESIST.

--- IN FACT, THE TREMENDOUS EFFORT NOW BEING MADE IN BELGRADE TO ASSURE MILITARY SECURITY AGAINST ANY SOVIET MOVE FOLLOWING TITO'S DEPARTURE IS HEAVILY WEIGHTED IN THE DIRECTION OF LOCALIZED DEFENSE.

--- THE HEART OF THIS SECURITY SYSTEM IS A TERRITORIAL "PEOPLES' DEFENSE" WHICH CAN MOBILIZE MORE THAN 3 MILLION

YUGOSLAVS WITHIN 48 HOURS, ARMED AND WITH SPECIFIC TARGETS TO DEFEND. U.S. OFFICIALS SAY THAT THE REAL TEST OF TITO'S FEARS OVER WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER HE HAS DEPARTED THE PRESIDENCY IS THE FACT THAT HE HAS RISKED ARMING SUCH AN IMMENSE BODY OF CITIZENS AGAINST SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION OR SOVIET-INSPIRED UPRISINGS INSIDE YUGOSLAVIA.

--- THERE HAVE BEEN OMINOUS SIGNS LATELY OF EXTRAORDINARY SOVIET INTEREST IN THIS PEOPLES' DEFENSE. THE OBVIOUS IMPLICATION: WITHOUT TITO'S PRESENCE AS A UNIFYING FORCE, SOVIET DIPLOMACY WILL IMMEDIATELY AIM AT SPLITTING THE YUGOSLAV COMMUNIST PARTY AS A PRELUDE TO INTERVENTION.

--- GIVEN THE REPEATED FAILURES OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION TO CARRY CONGRESS WITH IT IN EFFORTS TO USE U.S. POWER AND INFLUENCE TO MEET SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN THE POST-VIETNAM ERA, THE MERE SALE OF A HANDFUL OF ANTI-TANK MISSILES TO YUGOSLAVIA MIGHT SEEM AN EMPTY GESTURE.

--- IN FACT, HOWEVER, THE ADMINISTRATION'S INTENT IS DEADLY SERIOUS: TO SHOW MOSCOW BY A MAJOR POLICY CHANGE THAT THE U.S. IS COMMITTED TO YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE AND IS PREPARED TO HELP UNDERWRITE IT WITH AMERICAN ARMS. UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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